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ABSTRACT

Encouraging a professional dialogue among teachers of English, this journal issue focuses on teachers' feelings about their own lives, their classrooms, their students, their specialized knowledge, and their problems. The titles of the essays and their authors, are as follows: (1) "Of Pigs and Stars: A Nebraska Memory" (G. L. Nelson); (2) "On Being on Base" (M. Diogenes); (3) "Confessions of a White House Ghost" (G. Fisher); (4) "Semi-Controlled Chaos: Getting "english" Out of the Classroom" (J. Forsyth); (5) "Making Lifelong Readers of Our Students" (M. A. Krabbe); (6) "Through the Year with Shawn (A Writing Experience)" (J. Franks); (7) "English and Language Arts--A Guided Tour through the State of the Art" (C. Suhor); and (8) "To the Power Brokers" (J. Hise). Poems by A. C. Bowman, L. Easton, and E. Hardt are also included, as is a letter by O. Osa discussing American literature in Nigeria. (JD)

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Arizona English Bulletin

Volume 28
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Winter 1987

WHAT WE ARE THINKING ABOUT ...

Our Own Lives
- "Of Pigs and Stars"
- "On Base"
- "Confessions"

Our Classrooms
- "Semi-Controlled Chaos"

Our Students
- "Making Lifelong Readers of our Students"
- "Through the Year with Shawn"

Our Specialized Knowledge
- "A Guided Tour Through the State of the Art"

Our Problems
- "To the Power Brokers"

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The ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN is a publication of the Arizona English Teachers Association, a nonprofit state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and a member of the NCTE Affiliate Information Exchange Agreement. The BULLETIN exists to create effective statewide articulation of English and Language Arts teachers at all levels, to increase awareness of new ideas, programs, and movements in English, and to improve instruction at every level.

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The ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN invites language arts teachers at all levels--elementary, secondary, college--to submit manuscripts for consideration. Articles from many perspectives will be considered: reviews of literature, program descriptions, classroom strategies, news items, research studies, syntheses of current theory, etc. The BULLETIN especially seeks articles from elementary and secondary educators. Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced. (Dot-matrix is acceptable.) Send two copies and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the

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EDITOR'S PAGE

The **Arizona English Bulletin** has a new look! We've found new ways of processing the information you're used to seeing in the bulletin and we have some new features inside, features designed to encourage a professional dialogue with colleagues across the state (and even out of the state). For those of you interested in this kind of dialogue, there are some specific ways you can participate.

First, we will continue with *Themes* for upcoming issues. Watch for specific themes on the call for manuscripts page near the back of each issue. When a theme comes up that you have worked with in your classroom, send us your teaching ideas. We're all looking for new ways to help our students. And send us ideas for themes!

Second, we have a new feature, the *Forum* page. This page will raise an issue of concern to all of us as English teachers and provide a place where you can respond with your thoughts and opinions. So send us your reactions.

Third, we need input for *Reports of Professional Activities*. Let us know what you've been doing and what's coming up.

Fourth, we want to know what books you've been reading. A *book review* page--Are You Looking For Something On?--will provide a place for us to share books.

Fifth, if you have friends who teach overseas, encourage them to write us about their experiences. As educators, we live in an international community. *Dear U.S. Colleagues* will give us an opportunity to know more about what teachers overseas are doing.

Last, if you want to participate on a regular basis, we're looking for 4 *columnists*--elementary, secondary, 2-year college, university. Every issue we'd like to highlight particular concerns of each teaching area, and we need writers to help us. If you think you'd be interested in doing something like this, send us a list of issues you'd like to see addressed, a statement of why you'd like to be a columnist, and a sample of your writing.

Even though this is the first issue I've had responsibility for as editor, I've already got people helping me (thus, the "we" above). Pam Lasher (Weitzel Elementary School), Mark Julien (Coconino High School), Mary Beth Green (NAU), and Jeff Schiff (NAU) have agreed to serve on an advisory/editorial board to help get me started in the right direction. And if you have ideas for future issues, please send them to me--I'm looking for suggestions!

Thanks for your interest in the **AEB.**

Suzanne Bratcher
English Department, Box 6032
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Flagstaff, AZ 86011

Of Pigs and Stars: A Nebraska Memory

by G. Lynn Nelson

The night Jennie lay in her pen in the straw, struggling to have her babies, my father wasn't there. He was in town, drinking.

My father drank a lot in those days. I was only twelve then and did not understand the dark silence that would gather around him, growing slowly over the days until, inevitably, the smell of whiskey would be on his breath and then, soon after, he would go away from us.

Perhaps, I vaguely thought, it had something to do with the stern God of my grandfather, to whom my father would not bow down. Perhaps my father drank to spit in that God's face, or my grandfather's face--or to hide from both of them. Or perhaps he drank merely to escape the relentless pressure of the grim gamble of corn and wheat on marginal Nebraska soil and the fine line that kept the meager food upon our table. Perhaps.

At twelve, I did not know why my father drank; I only knew he did. And I do not remember ever feeling much anger toward him for his drinking--only a dull sadness that shadowed my days and a vague fear that lurked in my nights.

But I did feel anger on this day. Jennie was not just any pig: she was my pig. I had caught her the year before in the pig scramble at the county fair . . . Twenty-three boys at one end of the hog-wire pen and six wild-eyed, frightened pigs turned loose at the other end and the gun sounded and we went running at them and then it all dissolved into a flurry of bodies and dust rising and pigs squealing and running and I could not see and someone ran into me and I fell and then she was moving past me as if in slow motion and I reached out and easily grabbed her hind leg and held on and rose from the dirt and dust and flailing bodies and walked through the roiling world pulling her to the gate and the judge where she was mine.

She weighed only fifty pounds when I caught her--a beautiful little red Duroc gilt. My father was delighted, of course; in our struggle to survive on the farm, she was valuable stock. But at twelve, I did not think of her that way. At twelve, she was special because she was mine.

In the year that followed, as I fed her and cared for her, she grew to more than three hundred pounds, larger than anyone expected. In late winter, the old Hampshire boar had sniffed her and mounted her and rutted on her--and then, over the ensuing months she grew even larger, and now she was trying to have her own first litter of pigs. But she was in trouble.

It was a Saturday in April. The Nebraska hills were growing green with alfalfa and winter wheat, and wild V's of ducks and geese passed overhead, winging north. My father had left in the afternoon to go to town for parts for the planter. But I had seen the shadows gathering in his eyes all week; and as we worked on the planter in the morning, the sour smell of whiskey was on his breath. I knew he might not be back for days.

Shortly after my father left for town, I noticed that Jennie was nesting. In her pen in the pig shed she had pushed all the straw into one corner. As I watched, she would lie down on it for awhile, but soon she would struggle to her feet and move about restlessly, grunting and snorting. I knew the time for her farrowing was near. I also knew that mother pigs often had complications with their first birthings. I kept glancing anxiously down the long gravel road that stretched toward town, four miles away. But my father did not come.

All afternoon, I watched and waited. When the sun began going down behind the distant hills, I carried corn to the other pigs outside in the large pen and put the four milk cows in the barn and milked them. When I took the buckets of milk down to the house, my mother looked closely at me and asked how Jennie was doing. I just shrugged my shoulders. Neither of us said anything about my father's absence. We both knew where he was, but we never talked about his drinking. We never entered that darkness with our words.

After supper, I took the lantern and the flashlight and went back up to the pig shed. I hung the lantern on a nail; it cast a feeble, yellow light. The I stepped up onto the side of Jennie's pen, leaned over, and shined the light on her. She was stretched full-length on her side in the darkness. Each breath came groaning from her and convulsed her huge body. And every few minutes, her breathing would stop, her great body would quiver and strain, and she would rake the ground with her feet. But nothing would happen. Her snout was open and her tongue hung out and a white, foamy saliva dripped from it. Her little eyes seemed lost in the immensity of her body and its struggle. Behind her, the water bag had emerged and broken, and a bloody water dampened the straw. But there were no babies.

In my fear and helplessness, I wanted to leave, to run away--but instead, I switched off the flashlight and climbed down into Jennie's pen and sat there in the dirt across from her. In the dim lantern light, things were soft and indistinct and flowed together; and all the world, it seemed, grew silent except for the terrible sounds of Jennie's struggle. Gradually, as I sat there, my mind numbed and my breathing slowed. The smells of blood and urine and wet spring earth rose up around me, and slowly, without knowing it, I began to breathe and my body began to rock in rhythm with Jennie's labor.

I do not know how far the stars moved across the spring sky as I rocked there, lost in the pain and the struggle and the mystery of that little place. I know I did not sleep but neither was I fully awake, for at some time a sound came to me from beyond my rocking and Jennie's weakening labor and, startled, I looked toward the doorway and he was there, a large shadow against the starry night sky behind him.

And then he was there in the pen with me. He had towels and a milk bucket filled with soapy water. "Hold the light," he said. He was unsteady and his voice slurred slightly; he smelled of beer and cigarette smoke and stale sweat. He put the bucket down and plunged his hands into the soapy water and then moved toward Jennie, dragging me with him. He knelt behind her, and I knew then what he was going to do, what had to be done, and I turned away.

"Hold the light still!" he commanded. And so I had to watch as his shaking, soapy fingers began to probe and as, slowly, slowly, my father's hand entered Jennie's body . . . slowly, up past the wrist and still further . . . and Jennie pig-screaming now and my father sweating and muttering, "There . . . there . . . ah . . . turned sideways . . . there . . . ," and for long minutes the sound of his own struggling along with Jennie's--and at last his his hand coming slowly down out of her body and just behind it the wet, slimy, sac-encased creature now turned straight and diving dead into the world. It lay still upon the straw, and my father pulled back and stared for a moment at his bloody hand, and then Jennie was grunting and groaning anew, and my father was leaning over into the next pen, retching, and I, lost in wonder, watching, and when I looked back there were three wet, pink bodies squirming on the straw--and even as I stared, a tiny nose and two shell-white hooves appeared and jennie shook and strained and another slid out upon the straw, gasping.

And then my father picked up the dead fetus and flung it through the doorway and out into the darkness where tomorrow, I knew, the other pigs would eat it. And then he was gathering up the towels and bucket and muttering for me to bring the lantern . . . .

And so I followed my father through the silence and the darkness of the spring night toward the distant square of light where, I knew, my mother would be waiting. Ahead of me, my father's back was large against the starry sky, which had now come down very close to the earth--and we were, my father and I, for just a moment, walking through the stars together, my father and I.

1986 Teachers As Writers Contest--1st Place
Judges: John Casey, Cora Cresswell, Tommy Harper

On Being on Base

by Marvin Diogenes

I'm standing behind home plate, relegated by blossoming paunch, molasses-like reflexes, and repeated failures of nerve to the position least dangerous to my team's chances of winning the game. This night has been the worst of my life in slo-pitch softball, though I began it hopefully. After a layoff of six months, I'm finally back with the Rhetors, listening to the lazy chatter of my teaching colleagues ranged in familiar array on the field before me. Even the stench that washes over us in nose-curdling waves from the sewage treatment facility a half-mile upwind from Tucson's Sportspark seems sweetly familiar. But, because my muscles have turned to taffy and my legs to pillars of straw, I've struck out three times so far. I've swung mightily and missed wildly, again and again, like a broken record of "Casey at the Bat." Three times I've walked back to the bench, bat dragging behind me, the sad stub of a lance. Unwilling to disgrace myself further with any petulant displays of rage, I've placed the bat softly in the rack and stared at the cigarette butts on the cement floor of the dugout. My teammates, my friends, have averted their eyes.

Now the game still close, agony rushes to join humiliation in a goulash of despair. The ball leaps off an opposing bat into the outfield, and the potential tying run takes off from first. Somehow, the punch line in a cosmic joke, the ball comes to me as the runner decides to disdain second and try for third. "Throw it to third," my brain barks to my body, my brain primed by hundreds of hours of softball past, by thousands of innings spent watching real baseball on television. My body, that tub of goo, obeys according to its abilities. My throw fades away from the lunging third baseman's glove and rolls pitifully into left field. The tying run scores, and the other team, inspired by my gift, will quickly add another run to win the game.

Above me, watching from the elevated benches of the concession stands, large men, made conscienceless and crude by beer, analyze the play. They analyze the play at the top of their drunken lungs, testing me for rabbit ears, the curse of the mediocre performer:

"Where'd you get that arm? The same place as your bat?"

"You call that a throw?"

Mostly I hear their laughter, which is far more eloquent than their words. Again I stare at the ground, and I ask myself, in the respite before the next batter approaches, why I am here. I have two college degrees, a responsible job, defensible views concerning world events. Why am I standing behind home plate taking abuse from people I wouldn't let into my house? Why am I playing the loser's role in this shoddy imitation of the Human Drama of Athletic Competition?

Why am I the poster child for The Agony of Defeat?

Let me explain:

Being on base is a spiritual condition, a state of grace disguised as part of a silly game aging boys play.

On base, I'm the sole tenant of a little rectangle of heaven on earth.

Consider the base: fluffy, exalted, a cloud-white puff on a field of green grass and brown dirt (where the Rhetors play, more often gravel than dirt). When I was a boy playing Little League hardball, the floppy pillows the city of Oak Park provided for bases could hide my ankles. I took every opportunity to loiter around the bases before the game, made sure to touch them between innings when sprinting to and from the bench, intent on impressing the coach with my hustle. You can still see major leaguers, men with stock portfolios and real estate holdings to rival those of senators, who ritually touch a base or two on the way to their positions. I know why. They're reminding themselves of why they play the game.

Listen:

The action of baseball takes place around and beyond the bases. That's where players work, that's where they earn their six figures and the adoration of the fans who live in the immediate metropolitan area. They chase down balls traveling faster than cars on the freeway, stretching sinew and extending limb to intercept blurred trajectories before they touch the ground, and then, human catapults, they heave the ball to an appointed spot where a teammate waits to do the same.

But all of this toil and sweat stops when one is on base. Certainly the vicissitudes of the game will obliterate the momentary peace, but these same vicissitudes, the stuff of histories and barroom debates, will eventually return the player to the state of grace. All the player must do is continue to weather the game to reap its rewards.

I think the Puritans would have loved baseball, seeing it as a metaphor of the fall. We are ensnared by the game, stepping up to face the Devil himself on the mound, that wily Satan with a deceptive repertoire of fast ball, slider, and curve. He tries to make us believe that the game itself is important, that glory resides in the material world of hits and runs and errors. Check your immortal soul at the door and step up to take your cuts, said Mr. Applegate to Joe Hardy in Damn Yankees, and Joe almost bit. Welcome to the Church of Baseball, where we can find refuge only in the base of Ages, that is if we wait out the Devil, that is if we have a good eye. Children beware of the fire and brimstone you'll encounter in the rundowns awaiting the unwary and the sinful. The Devil waits to pick us off the bases, and

when you're out, you're damned forever.
Thus the temptation: to love the game at the expense of the spirit, to prefer the hurly-burly of action to the tranquility of the base, to celebrate and pursue the ephemeral at the expense of the eternal.

As a child I had no such philosophy to explain the joy of being on base. It was what everone else wanted, so it was enough just to be there. I would peer at the third base coach, a man with thick forearms and a stubble-stained chin, and wait for the sign to steal, to move from first to second at the catcher's expense. Even then, I sensed the hubris involved in an attempted steal. Why call attention to oneself? Why get greedy? I didn't realize that coaches coach to win the day, not the millenium, and that they are never on base. They are interested in box scores, the prison of the historical record, not the bliss that only players may achieve.

Being on base is the perfect merging of individual expression and communal identity.

Some sample lingo:

"The bases are full of Rhetors."

"The Rhetors have loaded the bases on singles by Rosborough, Cummins, and Roen."

My shirt proclaims my allegiance, the deep blue letters of "Rhetors" flowing in script across my chest, the "s" directly underneath my laboring heart, but (and here twines the serpent at the heart of the matter) the base is mine, I have claimed it and planted the flag of my uniformed body on it, and more people will remember Hillary's name than the name of the country for which he climbed Everest.

Thus being on base appeals equally to the egoist and good citizen in each of us, and moreover it asks of us that we keep these conflicting drives in proper balance. The conflict is at root a moral one, so literature naturally finds the very stuff of life set out for close observation between the lines of the baseball field. Thomas Boswell of the Washington Post ponders "How Life Imitates the World Series" in his catalogue of meditations on the sport. Sadaharu Oh, the Japanese Hank Aaron, describes in his autobiography the "zen way of baseball," and the man is best illustrated by the way he plays his chosen game. As a high school senior applying to college, I sketched, in answer to an essay question about what kind of book I would like to write, an outline of a baseball novel about a character much like Pete Rose, a Charley Hustle type who was "A Winner When He Loses" because of his apparent devotion to his team. Already I had an inkling of the potential for deceit in baseball, for my novel would have been ironic, the hero's hustle revealed as a mask for selfish motives. Lies can be told with actions as well as words.

Bernard Malamud, an uncanny hybrid of a moralist and a baseball aficionado, offers, in his novel The Natural, a cautionary example of the consequences of a life lived out of balance. Bump Baily, the nonpareil left fielder of the New York Knights, leads the league in hitting while playing for a last-place team. Worse sin, he doesn't care. As long as his statistics proclaim his greatness, he is content. Malamud kills Bump off by having him race headlong into the immovable embrace of the left field wall, dreams of his own glory blinding him to his impending doom. Read the novel for the whole story of Roy Hobbes's tragic grappling with the same demons that killed Bump, or see the movie for a more upbeat resolution. Either version expresses the same theme: the player who truly understands the game, who merits being on base, is the player who makes those around him better players, who, through measured individual effort, makes the team greater than the sum of its parts. This is the baseball mystic's utopian vision of a classless society.

Home runs, in softball, strike me as vulgar. In real baseball one can go into the home run trot once the ball clears the fence. The runner slows down as he approaches each base and gives each base its due, regretting that he's unable to stay. In softball, home runs usually entail a mad dash around the bases, a gritty, knee-scraping race against the ball's return to the infield. Bases are barely touched in the process, as the goal of scoring takes precedence over everything else. Thpe A personalities revel in such madness.

Even doubles and triples share this taint, for they involve clout, and for one who wants only to be on base, and to be left alone there, clout has little appeal.

I prefer singles, base hits, which are so fundamental to the game that they call no attention to themselves. Unlike many of my peers, I willingly accept walks, too, which literally take the bat out of my hands but deposit me on first base, just as if I'd hit the ball safely. I achieve the desired result without the attendant violence that sullies even the most noble cause.

When I reach base, I must act in a manner befitting the privilege. I think the Amish would be at home on base, where it is becoming to be plain.

I never say anything. Any oral celebration would be in poor taste. I might respond to the lobbed congratulations of my fellow Rhetors with a quick thumb's-up or a nod, but mostly I fold my arms, their work done, across my chest and center myself over the base, a selfless obelist of grace. Of course some may interpret this stance as arrogant or self-satisfied, but I prefer to think of it as my way of being one with the base, of effacing myself and emphasizing the timelessness of the spiritual tableaux I'm enacting. Look at me, my stance quietly chants, I am at peace with the universe, like Buddha u;nder the lotus tree, enlightened. Nothing else matters, not the score, not the carnage of the material world, not the pitchers of beer sluicing the humanity out of the slobs above the backstop.

I assume my place, fold my arms, and wait. My fellow Rhetors advance to the altar of home plate, unnecessarily grim. There is flux all around me, the whirling maelstrom that has swallowed so many others, from Joe Hardy to Roy Hobbes, but for now I am on base, humming the mantra of the base, straight and centered as an arrow in the quiver of the u;niverse, and nothing else matters.

Confessions of a White House Ghost

by Gail Fisher

"Do you see that moon?" asked the diminutive blonde girl of her sandbox playmate. "My daddy wrote on that moon!"

James Humes, speech writer for Presidents, is fond of telling that story. It was former President Richard Nixon who requested Humes to write the lines that appear on a plaque on the side of the land vehicle that roamed the moon and was left behind: "Here men from the planet earth first set foot upon the Moon on July 6, 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all mankind."

Humes would be the first to say that speech writing for presidents is not always as glamorous as composing lines for the moon. "A lot of speeches are what I call Rose Garden rubbish. The President goes into the Oval Office and must say a few appropriate words for the Boy Scouts, the Easter Seal campaign, or offer a toast to a visiting monarch at a state dinner." But Humes quickly adds that he likes to write toasts because he gets invited to the dinners.

Much of what a President says, according to Humes, is simply ceremonial. "The public usually thinks that speech writers are busy preparing State of the Union or inaugural addresses. But those only happen once a year or every four years. It's a very small part of speech writing and doesn't keep you very busy," notes Humes.

Humes is a large man of large accomplishments. His varied career includes work as a lawyer, legislator, author, professor, actor, Churchill authority, communications consultant, and Presidential speech writer. When he isn't writing speeches, he conducts seminars for corporate executives on how to write speeches. Humes claims that the single motif that unites all of these activities is his love of the English language.

Humes has worked for Presidents Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, and Reagan. "As a Presidential speech writer, I am a stylist for the President," explains Humes. "I don't seek to put ideas in the minds of great men. Presidents don't want new ideas. They want to sound good. For example, when Ted Sorenson writes for Kennedy 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country,' that's not profound. It's just a balanced patriotic statement. A speech writer is more like the beautician you go to. It's the hair stylist that makes you look beautiful. In the same way, the President goes to a speech writer so he can sound beautiful."

The United States' President not only has the functional role of the Prime Minister, like Margaret Thatcher (whom Humes has written for), but also the ceremonial role of the Queen. Presidents must do both kinds of speeches and need speech writers because everything they say is usually etched in stone. Sometimes it can be disastrous if they try to talk off-the-cuff.

Humes recalls the famous gaffe made by former President Jimmy Carter when he was visiting Mexico. After the prepared toasts were given at a state dinner, Carter reminisced extemporaneously about the time he and his wife honeymooned in Mexico and came down with the stomach upset known as "Montezuma's revenge." The Mexicans were infuriated.

"Most of the time in speech writing you're translating from the bureaucratic to the poetic or from the legalistic into the eloquent. Often someone else writes a rough draft of what needs to be said and a speech writer translates it for the public," says Humes.

A common misconception about speech writers is that they are all specialists in foreign affairs, domestic problems, economics, etc. "Wrong," says Humes emphatically. "A speech writer must be a generalist. You cannot be too much of an expert. How are you going to arouse the public interest on, say, a tax issue if you use complicated terms?"

The public also thinks that a speech writer must write in the style of the President. Another misconception. The language must be kept simple. "I write simple conversational language with lots of graphic images and let that President make it his own with his inflections. For instance," explains Humes further, "if I were going to pick a dress for a friend of my wife's, I would stick with simple, classical lines and let the friend make it into her outfit with accessories and makeup."

Some people think that Humes caught the various Presidents' styles, but he says he wrote the same for all of them. The difference is that he would use their individual experiences, and in order to do that, he had to know them well. For instance, Humes realized that Nixon wanted to get across that he had traveled all over. "So I picked out people he had met and worked them into his speeches whenever possible. I wrote for Nixon once, 'I remember what Nehru told me at New Delhi. What the world needs is a generation of peace.' Nehru hadn't actually told that to Nixon, but I got it out of one of Nehru's biographies. It was simply a good chance to bring it in."

At a young age, Humes started writing down quotations from history and literature. He filled many books before he realized he was destined to become a speech writer. Nixon even called him a walking Bartlett's and once introduced him as a quote master. "I became known as a person to come up with a good quotation or good quote and story," says Humes.

"I got into speech writing by being clever and amassing this file for my own use."

His first exposure to the Presidency was through his father. Although he never met Franklin Roosevelt, he remembers sitting in the car outside the White House with his mother and two brothers while his father went inside with a letter of introduction to meet Roosevelt. Something about that incident remained with Humes and he knew that he wanted accessibility to the Presidency too.

While in his twenties, Humes volunteered to be an advance man for a $100-a-plate fund raiser dinner for Eisenhower. His job was to usher people to the tables and seat them. At one point during the dinner, the secret service approached Humes and said that the President had to relieve himself and wanted to know where the men's room was. The ladies room was closer, and since the President was already on his way, Humes ran ahead to the ladies' room and yelled inside the door, "Emergency, emergency! President of the United States! Everyone out!" As he remembers it, he forced some startled ladies out, swung the door open to hide the identifying sign, and stood in front of it as President Eisenhoower walked in.

When the President walked out, it was obvious that he had noticed the different plumbing facilities and gave Humes a steely look that was never forgotten. "That look said to me that he was fed up with sloppy staff work," Humes recalls. "But later I was to do part-time speech writing and research for him, so I guess I was forgiven. Eisenhower was all business, but he had charisma and a smile that could light up a dark room like a saint from a medieval painting."

Humes learned much about speech writing from Eisenhower since Eisenhower had been a speech writer for Douglas MacArthur. One time Eisenhower confided in Humes that MacArthur had an "I" problem. "I thought he meant glaucoma or something," Humes recollects. "But Eisenhower went right on to say: 'Yes, MacArthur was fatally attached to the perpendicular pronoun.' "

Even though Humes has written exclusively for Republican Presidents, that hasn't kept him out of the company of Democratic leaders. He recalls meeting former President Lyndon Johnson once at a party. Johnson, who at that time was the senate majority leader, approached Humes and said:

"Mr. Humes? Is that your name? Come over and have some 'horse doves' with me." Johnson went on to explain that horse doves was Texan for hors d'oeuvres.

"Are you that young man that's been described to me as brilliant?" asked Johnson.

"I am that young man, but I'm not brilliant," replied Humes.

"Do you know what I would do if you worked for me?"

"No, sir," said Humes.

"I'd fire you!" excalimed Johnson.

"Why sir?"

"Every time I read about some young man described in the paper as brilliant, I know he's been leaking to the press. And Humes, you're leaking all over like an unweaned young pup." Needless-to-say, Humes never did any work for Johnson.

Presidential speech writing is done like magazine writing, says Humes. An editor gives assignments to four or five staff writers. Sometimes the writing comes easily, or it may take many revisions. Humes recalls working all morning just to write one line in commemoration of Duke Ellington receiving a congressional medal of freedom. "In the royalty of music no one stands taller or swings higher than the Duke."

Another time Humes wrote twenty-eight drafts of an Air Force commencement speech before Nixon was satisfied. "Even though I wrote many revisions, I enjoyed working with Nixon because he would write back 'what did you mean by this?' in the margin of the speech. There was a lot of intellectual interplay. Nixon may have been awkward in social situations, but he was warm in working situations."

Humes credits much of his speech writing and public speaking expertise to his thorough study of Winston Churchill, whom he regards as the speaker of the century. Churchill, Humes says, instinctively understood that public speaking was the only way to become known as successful in his chosen field.

Churchill himself possessed neither the physical gifts nor the mental training that would lend itself to speech writing and speech making. He had a congenital lisp and stutter. He lacked a resonant, deep voice. His height of five feet five inches didn't offer an imposing presence. He never even went to a university. But Churchill went on to overcome all these obstacles proving that public speakers are not born--they are made.

When Nixon was Vice-President, he spoke before NATO with Churchill in the audience. Later Nixon met Churchill and asked him what he thought of his speech. Nixon, in describing this anecdote to Humes, says that Churchill replied, "Mr. Vice-President, the impact of your speech fell somewhat short of underwhelming. You talked about NATO, trade, welfare, etc., but it had no theme."

One basic key to successful speech writing and speech making is to stick to one theme. "If you can't say what the speech is about, it's not worth delivering in the first place," says Humes. And this is one of the rules he strictly adheres to in Presidential speech writing.

Humes helped former President Gerald Ford organize his memoirs for his autobiography A Time to Heal. "I told Ford that he had healed the wounds of war, Watergate, a feverish economy, and by extension a cancerous wife," says Humes. Using the beautiful symmetry from Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, "For everything there is a season, and time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die" Humes developed a thematic approach for Ford to follow in the outline of his book.

Humes describes Ford as being very matter-of-fact but gracious in social situations. Ford readily told all his speech writers they did a good job no matter what kind of speech they had written.

Humes wrote speeches for Ronald Reagan while he was governor of California and regards Reagan as a

successful communicator and speaker who knows how to end his speeches well. Reagan usually employs an emotional appeal that includes love of children, country, or God. Many speakers are afraid to use an emotional ending, but it's one of the strongest appeals.

Humes' collective expertise is gathered in some of the books he has written: Talk Your Way to the Top, Instant Eloquence, Roles Speakers Play, How to get Invited to the White House, and Churchill: Speaker of the Century. Humes is an expert at packaging personal knowledge and background into effective speaking.

The bottom line to becoming a successful and memorable speaker is something Humes learned from Churchill. Humes puts it this way: "Talk on something you know about, either through preparation or by application of your own experience--the way you do when you are effective in private communication--and you will be just as effective in public address."

1986 Teachers As Writers Contest--3rd Place
Judges: John Casey, Cora Cresswell, Tommy Harper

keeping records

it is not the fear
of children not learning,
it is the fear that
learning is not documented,
the of too little
information for parents,
the fear of attack . . .
needed: a better way
unlike the systems
of detailed record keeping,
the tidy little rows of percentages
averaged,
put on cards,
and sent home
to keep parents
off the scent
that little learning
is going on

Andrea C. Bowman

Semi-Controlled Chaos: Getting "english" Out of the Classroom

by John Forsyth

Do you remember the first time you made a real discovery? That feeling of awe and wonder and infinite possibility? I do. It was an absolutely clear Kansas summer night. Steve Miller and I were lying on our backs in deep bluegrass between two tall pines, listening to locusts and looking at stars through binoculars. For me, at that time in my nine-year-old life, the sky presented a pretty panaorama on an indigo background, and no more.

But Steve knew. As we gazed, he said, "I wonder how many of 'em are looking at you and me right now?" It was a simple question, but in that place and in that time, it went to my heart. In an instant, I realized the significance of those "gleams" and gained new insight into the scheme of things.

As a ninth grade English teacher, I have strived to position students so that they can see the universe that is English as I saw the stars in the summer of my ninth year. The vast majority of my ninth grade students, for whatever reason, come to their first day of class expecting neatly segmented clusters of reading and writing. They expect formal grammar exercises and other activities in which predictable behavior will meet with predictable results. English for them is a safe harbor divorced from the real world and, in my view, divorced from the potential for real discovery. I refer to this safe harbor English as "english," and I fight to get it out of my classroom.

While I recognize the value of carefully sequenced activities and predictable consequences for predictable behavior, I prefer to confront my ninth graders with the universe from the moment they enter the classroom. The universe they see, being a product of my intent and design, is not true chaos, but the students certainly perceive it as such.

They sense a problem with their English class on the first day when we dispense with introductions or any other typical preliminaries and engage in an inductive discussion of *The Declaration of Independence* and Diary of a Young Girl. The discussion moves through the various language experiences and skills used to create the works and toward the conclusions that English is everything and that young people as well as "grownups" live through their language.

At the end of that first period, students benignly nod with wisdom far beyond their years as I assert that English is everything--life. They want me to think that they know, that they understand. They may know, but they gon't believe--they haven't discovered--and I know that.

On day two, I begin to bridge the chasm between knowledge and discovery. I introduce chaos in the form of a panorama of activities which greet the student in unison. There is a journal entry to write every day, and there is an "issue of the week" to study and discuss. There are various short stories and poems to explore. I introduce words which will be important throughout the year--"relevance," "precision," "conciseness," and "ambiguity." There is some standard vocabulary work associated with the literature, a news report to give to the class, various interviews to conduct, numerous other writing assignments, a speech or two to give, and a little formal grammar tossed in to season the mix.

I maintain only limited control over what the students perceive to be chaos. A syllabus handed to the students on the second day of class gives some general guidance and I do provide some direction, but I keep it as vague as possible. Directed discussion occurs only rarely in the class, and for the most part, the teacher is a source of questions, not answers.

"Mr. Forsyth, when is this due?"

"I don't know--we'll see how it goes."

"Mr. Forsyth, how long do these have to be?"

"As long as it takes to do a good job."

"Do you think this is a good idea?"

"I'm not interested in what I think. What do you think?"

As the class progresses, a few incorrigible students work away, heedless of the doubt which gnaws at them. They'll get the grade they want without ever seeing what lies before them. Still other students have already lept to discovery, and they devour everything that comes along. Most students, however, undergo the shock, anger, denial, and readjustment associated with the death of their beliefs about English--"english"--a death which must precede a real discovery. From day to day, it shows in their quizzical faces and their journal entries, in which they vent frustration in various forms. More than one student asks, "When are we going to study English?"

After three or four weeks of this, I give a test which serves as a means rather than an end. It provides a focus for the review and synthesis which must occur constantly if the student is to make sense of the chaos that is the classroom/life. It also provides a place for me to ask several questions, including, "What is the most important thing you've learned in this class so far?"

The responses to that question have proven to me that I am on the right course for the teacher that I am. They reflect the chaos perceived in the classroom, the individuality of the students, and, to a great extent, a new belief. From that point on in the course, my students will be much more likely to enter my class without preconceived ideas. They will begin to make their own order out of the chaos; they will see the life in

the classroom. Theirs will be a new belief derived from true discovery. The gleams of "english" are gone; the universe of English gains the position it deserves in the minds of the students.

Let the students' responses to the test question speak for themselves:

From the remorseful students:

"It pays to do your homework because then you'll know what's going on."

"Not to let things go."

"The most important thing that I have learned is that there are a lot of definitions that we have to know. The reason that is the most important thing to me is because I don't know the definitions below and I should start learning them before I flunk."

From skills-oriented students:

"To be relevant, concise, and precise, because it should help in the real world."

"You can't be afraid to stand up and talk to the class or give a speech."

"To examine facts closely when reading."

"How to write stories and a journal because someday you might have to do some writing."

And finally, from many students, from across the range of abilities, the answer which I hope for and revel in:

"That English is everything. We've done a lot of things that seem "irrelevant," but when you stop to think about, you couldn't do it without English."

"Because you always use English no matter what you do."

"I have learned more in this class about English than in eight years of school because I learned that English is not just nouns and verbs. I learned that English is everything and more."

"I have learned that everything is related to English. At first I didn't believe that. Now as class goes on the more I learn that everything is related to English. I still don't see how the peanut butter sandwich is, though."

Amen. And you will--you will.

ODE TO MY WORD PROCESSOR

Mechanical Monster,
Your bits and bytes
Eat my thoughts alive,
Pull them from my head
Piece by bloody piece.

You chew these morsels of thought
Matter-of-factly, callously
And spit them out at me --

Reborn!

Green and luminescent now
They sparkle sagely
From your high tech screen.
New thoughts. My thoughts?
Yes, freed thoughts, real thoughts.

Fearsome monster machine,
You're welcome to dine --
Anytime!

Lois Eaton

Making Lifelong Readers of Our Students

by Mark A. Krabbe

One reason we are English teachers instead of math or home economics teachers is that we love to read. Chances are we read a lot as kids and read for enjoyment as well as for our required classes. Henry Thoreau summed it all up very well when he wrote in Walden, "To read well, that is, to read books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem."

It follows logically, then, that if we value reading highly enough to engage in it ourselves, we should want to make lifelong readers of our students--every one of them. To consider reading a treat, not a chore, to visit a library regularly, to trade and discuss books with their friends--we want our students to share in the same delight and satisfaction reading brings us. Books can take them to places and acquaint them with people they would never meet any other way. What could be more fun than having a mutual friend in Holden Caulfield, or sharing the view of a sunset on Walden Pond? Then, too, in times when impressionism has given way to graffiti, ballet to disco, and symphonies to punk rock, good books may be their closest exposure to art.

Reading encourages personal development and values clarification. It helps students make it through the dangerous days of adolescence when molehills are mountains and mountains just might explode. Who are the characters anyway? What kinds of decisions do they make? What kinds of friends would be be? How do they get along with their parents or get out of doing their chores? What happens when they make mistakes?

Adolescence is also a time to try on new faces and try out new interests. How about a book set during the Civil War? In a ghetto? About rabbits? About a career?

Besides expanding interests, steady reading expands abilities and vocabularies. Since students choose what they want to read, they might also slip from literal comprehension to interpretive and evaluative comprehension as well. If nothing else, an independent reading program would chip way at any negative sterotypes they have about reading. Gone will be the "bookworms" and the "brains" in a classroom where everyone is reading something.

Students aren't the only ones who will benefit. As teachers, wouldn't we also enjoy a change of pace and a chance to get in another chapter of a current bestseller? Better yet, an independent reading progrm will keep us young. It will keep us in touch with the students, with their interests, and with modern trends in young adult literature. So much for the stuffy spinster sterotype who sings the glory of The Scarlet Letter to the exclusion of any modern "junk." It isn't all junk, as we will discover. We will discover, too, as have other English teachers, that a set of principles--inherent in student responsibilities, teacher responsibilities, and evaluation criteria--govern an independent reading program.

If we were to condense into a single statement the responsibilities of teachers and students in an indepepndent reading program, we would simply say that the students must read and the teachers must get them to read. Yet there exist many other functions that students and teachers can and must employ to further enhance the independent reading program.

Teachers, to begin with, must be aware of what they are getting themselves into and, thus, be prepared. True, an independent reading program can be a most rewarding experience, but, at least initially, it will prove frustrating and challenging. Persuading students to read--especially to read independently--is not easy. Therefore the teacher must have patience, perseverance, enthusiasm, a zeal for teaching, a love of books, and an understanding of adolescents. None of these qualifications should be taken lightly--especially to a teacher inexperienced in conducting an independent reading program.

If, however, the teacher feels qualified to march into battle, there are several suggestions that, if utilized, will increase the chance of survival--if not also the chance of conquest.

First of all, teachers must consider the students. We must keep abreast of their needs and their interests--either informally, by listening to their conversations, or formally, by taking interest surveys. If we know what's "in" and what's "out," we'll have a better chance of relating. We must also allow students the freedom to choose their own reading materials, while maintaining criteria of good taste--Popular Mechanics is fine, but Playboy is not--and we must never force a student to start or finish a book. Such freedom ensures that our students enjoy what they read, and it instills in them a sense of responsibility by allowing them some say in their own education. Once materials are selected, we must provide students with some time to read. One supervised class period each week, for instance, will ensure that sutdnts do, indeed, read. Teachers, too, must participate, ardently resisting the urge to make the time an extra preparation period.

Students should also be given a chance to share what they have read with their classmates and their teachers. This allows them to proudly proclaim what they have learned and may serve to entice others to read the same book. The teacher, during such sharing times, should be open to students' interpretations. To be

overly critical, especially at first, can only serve to dishearten the independent reader. Directed praise and tactful criticism, however, will give the reader a sense of achievement and purpose.

If our time and the school's budget permit, we must also try to vary the reading atmosphere. Nothing can douse the already flickering flame of the independent reading program more quickly than coming into the stark, stale, straight-rowed classroom day after day. We must, therefore, try to keep the reading atmosphere as fresh and comfortable as possible. Throw-rugs, mood music, floor pillows, a day of outdoor reading, bright bulletin boards, a change in the seating pattern, and a book-related movie or television show are just a few of the many ways we can diversify the classroom environment in an effort to thwart boredom and disinterest.

Finally, teachers must "know their books" and make those books available to their students. If teachers are to facilitate discussion, meet students' needs and interests, and guide students from level to level of reading difficulty, they must have a veritable warehouse of book-knowledge stored in their minds for instant retrieval. Keeping recores of what students read, skimming books regularly, and checking suggested book lists are a few good ways to stay abreast of appropriate and available literature. Then, to make those books available to students, we can try book swaps, book fairs, the school library, the city library, bookstores, book warehouses, and, if all else fails, we can try to enlist the aid of the local community--perhaps parents and businessmen can pull the strings that we couldn't reach.

Students, too, have responsibilities to the independent reading program--mainly to read and read and read some more. The old line about repetition being the mother of study hits the independent reading program right on the nose. Step-by-step, students must set goals, choose their own reading materials, read, keep records of what they read, follow up their reading with various related activities as discussed below, and progress to books of increasing levels of difficulty.

We hesitate to outline methods of evaluation for fear that students will read because they have to, not because they want to. Ideally, an independent reading program would require no evaluation. Realistically, however, we realize that a light-handed evaluation will provide enough structure to keep a free reading program from becoming a three-ring circus. Recorded evaluation would also be good proof of accountability, should parents, principals, or board members question the validity of such a program.

We have a two-fold means of evaluation in mind, which will carry little letter-grade or point scale value. To monitor participation, a student will contract with the teacher as to what will be read, how much will be read, and what type of activities will accompany the reading. Activities may be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups. They include bulletin boards, other graphic displays, book covers, book ads, role playing, panel presentations, author investigations, and a variety of innovative "book reports." Information about students' progress can come from direct discussion with them, from observation, and from contracts. The following criteria are suggested to monitor progress: Are students reading more material? Are they choosing books on their own? Are they readily discussing their books? Are they exploring other interests or other authors?

Unfortunately, we cannot measure the real success of an independent reading program unless we are invited to the twenty and thirty year reunions of our students. Regardless, we value reading highly enough to take on such a program. The potential work and extra hassles will prove worthwhile, however, if we imagine the following situation. We meet an ex-student downtown many years later and conversation leads to an award-winning movie. "It was OK," the student says, "but have you read the book? It was even better."

Many teachers have found that the following ten books have really "turned their students on" to reading:

The Contender, Robert Lipsyte. An exciting story about a young Negro struggling to grow up and become a contender.

I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Margaret Craven. An emotional account of a young priest, fatally ill, working among the Indians.

After The First Death, Robert Cormier. A powerful drama of patriotism high on a bridge in Massachusetts.

The Chocolate War, Robert Cormier. Story of a high school boy refusing to be intimidated by the society and people around him.

Marathon Man, William Goldman. A young sprinter finds himself running for his life in a web of international intrigue.

Space, James Michener. A group of astronauts fly a tragic mission to the other side of the moon.

Where The Red Fern Grown, Wilson Rawls. A young boy grows up by coming to know the value of hard work and determination and the joy and sorrow of love.

The Pigman, Paul Zindel. Two sophomores, who hate school, come to meet "the Pigman" through one of their practical jokes and develop a relationship with him.

When the Legends Die, Hal Borland. A yound Indian boy rebels against the white man and vows never to return to the white man's ways.

The Outsiders, S.E. Hinton. Story of a rough and swinging gang of long-haired teenagers from the wrong side of the tracks.

Through the Year with Shawn (A Writing Experience)

by Joyce Franks

"Second grade is fun! We do stories and art projects and even science experiments. We do math and reading and social studies and spelling. My favorite is math. We get to hear stories from our teacher, too. I love Second Grade . . ."
So began Shawn's four page outpouring of thoughts, feelings, and reminiscences of the school year about to end. Four pages. From a second grader whose first "story" had consisted of three sentences. "I always dress up for Halloween. I eat lots of candy. I go to the school carnival." Shawn and my other second graders had just published several of their year's writing attempts in booklets prepared for Mother's Day. Shawn's book had been entitled "Through The Year With Shawn" and contained paragraphs written on a pumpkin shape, a turkey outline, a Christmas tree, a gift-box outline, an animal shape, a kite shape, an open book outline, and a flower. From his portfolio, Shawn and I had chosen "stories" that would show Shawn's progression as a writer through his second grade year. On the last page of the booklet, Shawn had written and decorated a personal Mother's Day message to his mom. The resulting book, written by Shawn and "published" by Room 43, would be something Shawn's mother would cherish for years to come. The benefits reaped by Shawn and his classmates would last a lifetime.

Fall Beginnings - Motivation and Methods

Each year in my classroom, the children begin to write during the first week of school. We start by drawing life-sized pictures of individual faces and then writing "All About Me" sentences to accompany the pictures. These are posted on a large bulletin board under the caption "The Kids in Room 43." Shawn had no trouble in drawing his picture but he announced that he could not write his sentences because he couldn't spell the words. It usually takes me about three weeks to convince my new students that it doesn't matter if words are misspelled or punctuation is not perfect (Graves, 1983). I tell my students that those things can always be "fixed" later. What I want them to do is write down all the interesting things inside their minds that are waiting to be said. I tell the children to spell the words the best way they can, and most of them become very adept at invented spellings as they write down their thoughts. They are at first pleasantly surprised that I can read their "stories"; they are even more pleased when their final drafts have been re-copied on different shaped patterns and placed on the bulletin board.

Shawn was one of my slow starters. No "story" was posted on the bulletin board next to his picture. Because Shawn was a constant talker, I knew that he could become a proficient writer (Bisset, 1981). My job was to convince Shawn of this. One of the pre-writing methods used many times in my classroom is brainstorming. The children generate words about a certain subject and I write them on the blackboard. The always-popular Halloween season provided the motivation for the turning point in Shawn's reluctance to put his thoughts down on paper. In early October I told the children that I needed some scary stories to place on a bulletin board decorated with a witch, a skeleton, and an evil-eyed jack-o-lantern. I asked them to tell me some words that they might need to have spelled for them if they were to write scary Halloween stories. The words came faster than I could record them. Within ten minutes, we had a vocabulary list of thirty-five or more Halloween words. The children began to write their paragraphs and I began to transfer the words to a large chart. I noticed that Shawn was writing along with the others. Shawn's final Halloween story was not "scary" and it was just three sentences long. But to Shawn it was a masterpiece, and after it had been copied onto a pumpkin shape and placed on the bulletin board, Shawn read it over and over again. A writer's soul had been stirred!

Shawn's Thanksgiving story, inspired by a classroom dramatization, was eight sentences long. It, along with twenty-three other "stories," was written on a turkey shape and published on the wall. An extremely important point in my writing program is making sure that each child who has written a particular "story" is able to see his or her work displayed. Holiday bulletin boards accomplish this very well.

Winter Progress - Functional Writing

After convincing my students that they are well able to write, I introduce them to several ways in which writing is used for real communication. What better way to teach letter writing than by writing a letter to Santa? Our first Christmas writing project had been writing descriptions of Santa after listening to a reading of "The Night Before Christmas." These had already been copied on Christmas tree cut-outs and were posted on the front board. I told the children that we would not put their letters ot Santa on the bulletin board, but that we would really mail them. I wrote on the blackboard the children's suggested words, which mainly consisted of the season's newest toys (the TV advertisers had

done their job well). We then discussed letter form, and I showed examples. We decided that "The North Pole" was all the address that Santa needed.

The students wrote their letters and the next day our lesson included addressing envelopes. Shawn's letter was short and to the point telling Santa exactly what he wanted for Christmas. He did add one sentence asking for a certain toy for his little brother. One of Shawn's classmates, however, wrote Santa a long letter telling him that he knew who Santa really was, but that he wouldn't tell anybody.

In the winter months after Christmas, our science lessons revolved around animals. This seemed the perfect time to teach the children how and where to look up information and write it down for the benefit of others. Each child chose a different topic, and with the help of parents, prepared a project or poster, an oral report, and a written report. Shawn chose farm animals in general for his subject, and his father helped him make a beautiful three-dimensional replica of a farm. Shawn worked very hard to assure that his written report was good enough to be displayed with his project. His motivation for writing was beginning to come from within himself. His final report was excellent.

Spring Success - Expressive Writing

A windy day in March provided just the motivation needed for an experience in creative writing. The class had made small construction paper kites in their art period, and we went for a walk to see how they would fly. The uncut grass on a section of the school ground looked like water as it rippled in the wind. The paper kites fluttered rapidly in the strong breeze. The children ran and shouted above the sound of the rustling trees. When we came back inside, my language lesson was quickly changed from grammar to composition. The children and I discussed what our feelings had been as we experienced the brisk winds. I told them that they could write anything they wanted about the wind or about the way it had made them feel. Shawn wrote in short, clipped sentences that sounded almost poetic.

"I like the wind. It is very nice.
It is very windy. It feels very, very good.
It blows the grass and flowers. I like it very much.
I like the way it flies my kite. I like the wind."

Others in the class wrote about the experience with equally strong expression. One child described a piece of playground equipment as a "giant ship sailing on the waving green ocean of grass."

Shawn and his classmates had grown used to my suggestions that they write about the things that they felt inside. We had had a lot of fun with Valentine's Day. The reading of several poems about Spring had inspired poems and "stories" about flowers, birds, and new beginnings. The year was coming to a close and the class was busily putting together their booklets that would become Mother's Day presents. I had had an individual conference with each child to choose which of their "stories" would be published in their booklet. Shawn had pasted all the holiday shapes in the correct order and was waiting for me to staple his book. He suddenly slipped up behind me, gave me a quick hug and said, "Mrs. Franks, this is going to be the best present my mother ever got in her whole life." I couldn't help but agree with him.

And one of the best "presents" that Shawn's teacher ever received was his end-of-the-year composition about second grade. Writing had become almost as natural as talking to Shawn and his classmates. They had been given the motivation, the acceptance, and the assurance that what they thought about, they could write about, and that what they wrote, others would enjoy reading (Dyson, 1982). Writing had become to them an acceptable way to express their feelings or to inform their readers of important news or facts. Shawn and his classmates were well on their way to becoming effective communicators, using language in its written form.

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English and Language Arts –
A Guided Tour through the State of the Art

by Charles Suhor, Director

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communications Skills

Teachers, supervisors, and researchers frequently look to ERIC for concise information about developments in English and language arts. While a search of the database yields documents aplenty, the Clearinghouse gets increasing demands from front-line educators for shorter publications like single-sheet Digests and other summary materials on important topics. This article attempts a "quick read" overview of various recent trends in the profession. The references--mostly from the last three years to assure currency--point to lengthier resources for follow-up reading.

To provide some emphasis, key phrases are italicized. A few works of particular importance are identified as "perspective-making documents"--that is, works which are (or promise to be) a lens through which the profession views major issues.

This overview ranges widely but is by no means all-inclusive. For example, a teacher working with dialogue journals or a scholar interested in narratology might wonder why these valued topics aren't noted. ERIC has materials on such topics in the database and in its publication program (e.g., Kreeft, 1983; Pradel, 1984). But choices for inclusion and exclusion were essential in creating this thumbnail portrait of the state-of-the-art.

If there is a single recurring theme in recent literature, it is the search for unity in various aspects of English language arts. Integrating the language arts, teaching the humanities, using whole language instruction, encouraging higher order thinking skills, and teaching composition through process instruction are but a few examples of the strain toward integration. Of course, the counter-theme in the literature is not advocacy of fragmentation of subject matter for its own sake. Rather, many believe that frames of reference other than (or perhaps in addition to) the holistic viewpoint are needed in articulating instructional practice or evaluating student progress. These themes and others will emerge in the ERIC's-eye view below.

Composition

The greatest upsurge of interest in recent years has been in the teaching and learning of writing. Writing process instruction (D. Graves, 1983; Hays, et al., 1983) draws upon knowledge of how writers actually compose, emphasizing both prewriting and revising in ways that are not common in most classrooms (Applebee, 1981). Although sometimes confused with less disciplined "prewriting" approaches of the late 1960s (Rodriques, 1985), process instruction is a genuine reorchestration of both old and new pedagogies.

Information about process instruction and other aspects of composition has been widely disseminated, especially through ERIC, NCTE, and the National Writing Project (Myers, 1985). In the last two years, 370 questions related to composition were ansered at ERIC/RCS, and recent ERIC books on writing (e.g. Kahn, et al., 1984) have been widely disseminated.

Of course, ubiquity does not necessarily imply that new insights are being formulated and ordered. Important perspective-making documents like George Hillocks' (1986) Research on Written Composition, a meta-analysis embracing hundreds of composition studies, help to sort out the effectiveness of traditional and innovative teaching methods. Hillocks' findings generally support some aspects of process instruction, such as emphasis on discussion and revision. But his work also suggests the utility of the traditional study of models of excellent writing--which is, of course, an element in some process models; and his expansive analysis lends support to sentence combining exercises. Consistent with conventional in-depth reviews on writing research (e.g., Mellon, 1967), Hillocks finds no evidence that study of formal grammar improves students' writing.

The influence of NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) and state and local English specialists has solidified a long-evolving change in external testing----viz., the extensive use of actual writing samples in testing writing (Hadley, 1984). While research demonstrating that such tests actually drive instruction is scant, an ample body of expert testimony and a small number of studies indicate that "objective" tests encourage worksheet instruction while tests with writing samples promote writing in the classroom (Suhor, 1985).

Writing across the curriculum is another highly visible movement. The goal here is not to make every teacher into an English specialist but to encourage teachers to help students use writing as a way of learning--i.e., as a way of organizing and giving shape to nascent ideas (Thaiss, 1986). The movement parallels and supports trends such as cross-disciplinary and humanities instruction and the teaching of higher order thinking skills.

Another important trend, the use of computers in writing instruction, is focusing increasingly on revising, since word processing software permits the student to do extensive revision without requiring time-consuming handwritten copies (Wheeler, 1985). However, the need for keyboard skills (Rothenberg, 1984) and the lack of adequate models for teacher training in computer-assisted writing instruction continue to be limiting factors (O'Donnell, 1985).

Class size, an intensively studied educational problem, is now being explored specifically in terms of composition instruction. Some states (e.g., Florida, Vermont) have already limited the number of students in high school composition classes, permitting teachers to spend more time responding to students' writing. But there is a lack of solid empirical evidence linking class size and effective composition instruction. A new ERIC publication by William L. Smith (1986) and the NCTE Task Force on Class Size suggests the kinds of studies that might throw new light on the subject.

Reading

Like composition, reading is a field marked by change and controversy in recent years. However, in 1985 a perspective-making document, Becoming a Nation of Readers (Anderson, et al.), was published. The volume did not quell longstanding controversy over issues such as the role of phonics instruction, readability formulas, and the testing of reading; but it did offer some balanced viewpoints by one group of noted scholars and practitioners, (Koenke, 1986).

A look at the larger body of literature on reading instruction, though, suggests that polarized viewpoints are unlikely to vanish. Advocates of whole language approaches continue to stress holistic, transactional pedagogy, holding that isolated skills instruction gives attention to decoding at the expense of comprehension (Watson, 2985). Others see part-to-whole instruction as essential for beginning readers, claiming that phonics-based programs are most effective (Flesch, 1985; Groff, 1985). Attempts at integrated approaches (e.g., Botel and Seaver, 1984) can be found, in line with the spirit of Becoming a Nation of Readers, which takes a middle ground on decades-old issues. Koenke suggests that differences among reading specialists can be seen as existing as on a continuum, with positions shifting over time as new research provides more useful guides to practice.

Current research emphases in reading are varied, but many are in the direction of integrating reading with other human capacities. For example, ethnographic studies (e.g., Siegel, 1984) view the printed word from a semiotic viewpoint. Print is seen as one among many symbol systems that children learn to "read" in the course of their cognitive development. John Henry Martin's "Writing to Read" program, evaluated favorably by Educational Testing Service (Murphy and Appel, 1984), approaches reading instruction as integrated with student writing. Martin uses computer technology to teach a simplified alphabet that permits students to write fluently before they can decode conventional spelling.

Little's (1985) review of the literature of computers and reading instruction notes that bolder approaches like Martin's writing/reading proram are relatively rare. Short-term studies dealing with simple drill and practice software are far more common. Such problems prompted the International Reading Association (1984) to publish guidelines for teacher use of computers. Moreover, groups like EPIE (Educational Products Information Exchange) provide ongoing evaluation of software in reading and other disciplines.

Finally, textbooks in reading have received extensive scrutiny. Texts that are "dumbed down," supposedly to make them accessible to poor readers, actually become less comprehensible, according to Armbruster (1984). For example, texts with short, simple sentences lack both the connective words and the syntactic richness that give form and direction to the ideas in texts of normal complexity. Readability formulas, Cullinan and Fitzgerald note (Maxwell and Allen, 1984), encourage vapid, tedious texts. Goodman (1985) holds that basal readers lack the motivating qualities of real narratives and can frustrate the primary goal of producing students who read for enjoyment and enlightenment.

The readability of textbooks in content areas is hampered by the phenomenon of "mentioning"--that is, publishers feel that materials are marketable only if they include all the topics called for in typical school curricula. Hence, the need to "mention" a plethora of topics necessitates cluttered and superficial expositions that prompt students to memorize information rather than engage in critical and analytical thinking (Dronca, 1985). Further, studies by M. Graves (1984) reveal that school materials rewritten by journalists from Time magazine were far more intelligible than those written by either linguists or authors from textbook companies. Textbook publishers have also been criticized for bowdlerizing literary works--through changes or omissions--without stating in the text that changes have been made (Maxwell and Allen, 1985).

Literature

Specialists in the teaching of literature such as Darwin Turner have pointed to an apparent decline in literary study in the schools (Bryant, et al., 1984). The basic skills movement and many proposals for high school reform underplayed the study of literature. The idea of literature as an exploration of the human condition has received less attention than literature as an extension of reading skills instruction.

However, recent reform documents have stressed rigor and serious inquiry in school curricula, and there is now evidence of renewed interest in literature as part of our cultural heritage (Fancher, 1984). The return to an interest in the content of the literature curriculum has reopened old questions and shaped some new ones as well. Debates over the place of young adult literature and an established canon of literary works are reappearing (Bernstein, 1984). High school literature textbooks of the mid-1980s are leaning towards the classics again, resembling the thick, hardbound standard anthologies of the 1950s that emphasized great authors and famous works. Also, new variations on core curriculum and humanities approaches are appearing, such as E.D. Hirsch's (1985) concept of "cultural literacy."

English teachers are also attempting to adapt contemporary literary criticism to their classrooms--a difficult task, since so many teachers have been comfortable either with historical/biographical criticism or with the close-analysis-of-text advanced in the New Criticism. After a brief vogue of myth criticism that reached a peak in the 1960s, numerous critical

approaches have competed for the attention of scholars and classroom teachers. Structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstructionism, response theory, semiotics, Marxist analysis, feminist criticism are approaches that have made their mark in the universities (Cantor, 1985). But apparently a combination of elements--from inertia to common sense to the abstruseness of much contemporary literary theory--has discouraged classroom applications. Shuman (1984) has attempted a brief and lucid explanation of several modern theories for secondary teachers. Fink (1985) has provided a concrete example of classroom deconstructionist analysis of a Shakespearean sonnet.

Although it is too early to sort out the influence of competing theories, two seem to be well suited to application in elementary secondary schools. Reader response theory, especially Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory, is based on the psychology of the learner and draws upon psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge. As Cunningham and Luk (1985) note, semiotics also provides a frame of reference in which the student as learner is accounted for, and the literature curriculum is cast as a sign system rich in possibilities for interaction with the reader.

Finally, political and moral concerns are still highly visible in discussions of school literature programs. Speaking of teaching moral values in general, Bennett holds that instilling a coherent moral vision is part of the role of public education (Janson, 1986). Insofar as students in English programs explore the values and decisions of fictional and historical figures, the exercise of moral education seems inherent in literary study (DeMott, 1984). Some have argued that parents have such a stake in the schools' treatment of moral values and students' personal opinions that safeguards should be established in schools (Schlafly, 1985). Hence, there is now considerable controversy over the range of application of the Hatch Amendment to the General Education Provisions Act of 1978 (Hogan, 1985). Additionally, censorship questions continue to be argued in the courts, with recent cases focusing on works from Twain's Huckleberry Finn to Judy Blume's Then Again, Maybe I Won't.

Speaking and Listening

The "cutting edge" influences on the teaching of speaking and listening continue to be rooted in cognitive psychology--notably, the thinking of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Luria. Instructional applications are drawn from recent writings in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics (e.g., F. Smith, 1981; Halliday, 1981), with translators like Moffett and Wagner (1983) providing the most expansive classroom applications.

Concern with speaking is focused on two areas--classroom interaction and student dialects. Interest in classroom interaction is linked directly with process approaches to writing instruction, because student discussion is an important part of both prewriting and peer evaluation. Theory, research, and practice of group discussion in the classsroom have been a vital part of the literature of language arts education for over a decade (e.g., Book and Galvin, 1975). More recently, the case for classroom interaction has been strongly linked to multidisciplinary research in cooperative learning (e.g., Johnson, et al., 1984). Additionally, sritiers like Staton (1983) and Kirby and Kuykendall (1985) have now shown practical ways of linking classroom interaction with the development of students' thinking skills.

With regard to the question of student dialects, some clarifications of the effects of nonstandard dialect on classroom performance have been made. For example, Farr and Daniels (1986) point to research indicating that the influence of spoken nonstandard usage on the individual's written expression is less extensive than had been previously assumed. Labov, however, notes an increasing distance between certain aspects of nonstandard dialect in Black speakers and standard English, despite predictions that dialect differences in America would narrow because of the presumed homogenizing effects of television, radio, and film (Stevens, 1985).

School programs geared towards teaching standard English appear to be gaining ground (Hooper, 1985). But the teaching methods in second dialect instruction still follow the tried-and-untrue route of formal grammar instruction, according to Rubin (1984). Reviewing the literature of oral language instruction and its influence on writing, Rubin concludes that classroom practices such as role-switching activities, peer questioning, forensic discussion, and other interactive methods hold greatest promise for affecting standard English instruction.

The references below are, in general, "first resort" documents for futher information on the topics discussed in this article. Further information and extensive searches can be obtained through User Services, ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

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To the Power Brokers

by Jesse Hise

Confusing and depressing thoughts flow in and out of my brain these days in the midst of my thirtieth year of teaching.

I'm fighting the usual vagaries of getting older: that alluring illusion of the good old days, that lingering feeling that education is going to hell in the bread basket, and that subtle yet pervasive belief that society in general and parents in particular have deserted the public schools, leaving me exhausted and disturbed as I try to follow the latest mandates from the state legislature, the school board, the superintendent, the principal, the custodian.

Will I collapse under the weight of the Effective Schools Movement? (Sounds a bit like a bodily function, doesn't it?) Can I monitor and adjust myself everyday to see if I am teaching all the essential elements? Have I covered the required competencies? Am I an inspiring teacher? Do I know the secrets of getting students involved? Can I prove it? Can I justify my next step on the career ladder? Are my students excited over Emily, do they tremble with Poe, do they think with Thoreau? Am I teaching them the dangers of drugs, the evils of drunk driving? Am I preparing them for college? Can I prove it? Am I raising their expectations? Am I giving the proper amount of homework, not too much, not too little? Am I preparing them to properly fill out a form?

My real fear is that perhaps the world is not crazy, and that instead of being that last bastion of sanity, I am really stark raving mad. So that is why I need your help, all you legislators, board members, report writers, schools analyzers, competency soothsayers, standardized test makers, and other wizards.

Problem Number One

I entered teaching back in those ancient days when a fair number of people assumed teachers had some ideas and training that could help students, so I believed I had a degree of appreciation from not only parents, but from the school board and other assorted important people, including the students.

Today I keep receiving notices of workshops on the joys of early retirement. Am I receiving hints? I am told by national publications that I am a low achiever, since I entered teaching in the midst of the gigantic teacher shortage of the 50's. They'd hire anyone then. Of course, this "low achiever" label is also applied to those college graduates of recent years who have entered education. I sat down the other night with two books and 47 articles entitled "What's Wrong With Our Schools?" and figured out that the only intelligent teachers entered teaching between September, 1963 and June, 1974. All the rest of us are stupid.

So, my first request is: could you ask people to stop trying to convince me that I'm not smart enough to be a teacher? That would help a little, particularly since most of these people seem to believe that all we ahve to do is ORDER students to do as we say and they will dutifully obey.

Problem Number Two

Despite the fact that I've continually attended university clases, taught university classes, attended workshops, in-service programs, conferences, and even read a few hundred books or so since leaving college, I am constantly being told that I must be retrained in this and that. Older teachers seem to be the bane of their school boards. Older teachers always resist new ideas goes the cliche.

Yet it was my generation of English teachers who, with enthusiasm and intelligence and joy, created the era of high school English electives. In a difficult time of massive youth resistance and rebellion and the newness of drugs and Vietnam, we kept students interested in literature and writing and media and thinking. However, they weren't all reading the same things. They weren't all writing the same things. And, in many schools apparently, even such greats as Shakespeare got routed to Kansas.

Were we allowed to monitor and adjust? Nope. The gods descended from the state legislature and put the squeeze on local school boards. "Back to the basics" became the rallying call. The basics are all those boring little tasks that few do well, except trained bureaucrats or secretaries whose pay depends upon filling out forms correctly.

Out went the elective and in came the same material we had discarded a few years before because the students were so resistant.

We lost something else--any semblance of control over the curriculum. The curriculum was effectively taken over by the school board and the state legislature. And if we couldn't teach it effectively, well, that's because we were too old and hidebound. So they added workshops on how to teach.

So what I am asking here is: could all you various power brokers who now make the decisions, (that I try to carry out with an 89% success rate) question your own enthusiasms, your little panaceas? Could you possibly consider that perhaps teachers do have some knowledge and ideas that are worth listening to?

Problem Number Three

I'm tired of being accused of becoming a burnout (even if my fingers are singed!)

Worse, I'm afraid of become a burnout. Oh, I do remember my young years when I dripped contempt over all the old teachers at my school that I perceived as being narrow, sick-of-students, good-old-days teachers, living in a past that had never existed. We didn't have the phrase "burnout" then, but had I known it, I would have mumbled it every time I passed certain classrooms where the ditto sheets flowed like wine at a wedding.

Yet I fear. Few can remain in the same circumstances in teaching and not become a burnout. As a high school teacher, I've changed classes, classrooms, schools, taught everything from freshman remedial to senior AP, tried everything. But even that won't work 100 percent.

What teachers need to avoid burnout is the ability to change, not only schools, but school districts, if necessary. What if a person is going with the flow of life and learning and suddenly, a new school board, a new superintendent, hits the district with drastically different approaches. It's shape up or ship out time, but where can a teacher go? Oh, many places, as long as one is willing to take a 10,000 to 15,000 dollar pay cut.

So, what I'm asking now is this: how about a state-wide salary schedule? How about school districts recruiting teachers from other districts? New faces and places, and gee whiz, they really want me at age 54 to come and teach for them? They believe that maybe I do have some competencies, some essential elements, some basic skills, and that I don't have to be encouraged to retire because I don't worship at the altar of standardized test scores. I think that would help keep me from burning out.

Problem Number Four

To cheer myself up the other day, I pulled out my secret file of letters and notes that students have written to me over the years. Then I became absolutely depressed.

I realized that in my first years of teaching, those carefree years when I was convinced I should be making the decisions in my classroom, the notes and letters students wrote me all said the same message: "Mr. Hise, you taught me to think."

The years in which I received those notes were all years in which I was constantly in trouble with my principal and other administrators, with some parents, and with some students because I used themes in literature to challenge student's assumptions. Some became angry with me because I wouldn't back down from insisting that they defend their ideas. Some thought I was too outspoken.

Eventually, for various reasons, I retreated from that approach. Maybe it was partially the influence of the years my school board banned a poetry book from our schools because it contained "I sing of Olaf" by e.e. cummings. Maybe it was the nomination of Barry Goldwater for President. Maybe it was the unsigned letter in my teaching file that suggested I wasn't "anti-communist." Whatever, the notes and letters I received from students after those few early years, talked about other aspects of my teaching; no more comments about how I taught them to think.

I'm not blaming anyone except myself, really. But what I'm asking is: do you really think you are going to get exciting teaching without controversy? Do you really think that a society which insists that scientific concepts be taught from Bible stories is going to receive effective teaching? Do you really believe that we can teach students to think without rocking a few boats?

So my needs and wants are simple. I'm simply asking you to stop telling me I'm ill-trained and stupid besides. I'm asking for a bit of respect for my yuears of learning and experience, to be allowed to make a few curriculum decisions myself. I'm asking for the right to seek employment outside of my school district and receive equivalent compensation. And I'm asking for encouragement to get students thinking even if I upset a few taxpayers.

Believe me, you'd be surprised how happy we teachers get when we receive a little appreciation!

Dear U.S. Colleagues:

With technological advancement, the world is becoming smaller everyday. Two major airlines--Nigeria Airways and Pan Am have direct flights from Murtala Muhammed Airport Ikeja, Lagos, to John Fitzgerald Kennedy Airport in New York. The Voice of America broadcasts news about America and other parts of the world clearly to Nigerian homes. In Lagos and other Nigerian big cities, one can find American-made goods--books, shirts, trousers, and cosmetics. Many American television programs like "The Jeffersons," "Love Boat," "Soul Train," and wrestling matches abound on the screens of the Nigerian Television Authority and other state owned television stations. Thus, from the standpoint of goods, recreation, communication, and ease of transportation, Nigeria and the U.S. have become closely linked. Culturally and psychologically, however, America remains to many Nigerians primarily a country much blessed where fortunes can be made. Although Nigeria and America share quite a number of similar cultural values, the degree of mutual understanding is still low.

In Nigeria, a remark that one is doing research in American literature will likely elicit raised eyebrows and an incredulous, "What do you know about America and why research in American literature anyway?" Nigerian understanding of American literature has progressed no further than the knowledge that it is a body of artistic creations from one of the major English traditions. Prior to the sixties, the literature that was emphasized in Nigerian schools was primarily British. This is not surprising since Nigeria was a British colony.

As a matter of fact, American literature was popularized in Nigerian high schools by American Peace Corps teachers in the 'sixties. These Peace Corps volunteers brought along with them a number of paperback novels, which they gave freely to their students to read. But the popular ones that were actually taught in the classrooms were John Steinbeck's The Pearl, Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea, Pearl S. Buck's The Good Earth, and some works of Edgar Allan Poe. (Incidentally, Steinbeck's The Pearl was my first exposure to American literature, and Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer was my prize in English language from Jonathan Kwitny, the Peace Corps volunteer at the Western Boys' High School, Benin City, Nigeria in 1965/66.) In the sixties, American literature texts in Nigerian schools helped to increase students' language arts skills--especially their reading skills. Besides recommended school texts, the availability of a substantial number of paperback novels from these American Peace Corps volunteers was also turning some students into avid readers. However, the end of the Peace Corps era in Nigeria reduced the strength of American literature in the Nigerian English classroom.

Nevertheless, The Pearl, The Old Man and the Sea, Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle are still popular titles in some Nigerian high schools. Besides its beautiful prose, which has the potential of increasing Nigerian students' mastery of the English language, The Pearl is taught today by Nigerians, with due regard to its relevance to the Nigerian culture. Although one cannot necessarily categorize The Pearl as a young adult novel, the story of Kino the fisherman is used in Nigerian schools to teach the dangers of rigidity even in the face of all odds. Kino's pearl, which he greedily holds on to, brings him enemies and turns him into a murderer. The story of the old Cuban fisherman and his long fierce battle with sharks to protect the giant marlin he caught in the gulf stream in The Old Man and the Sea is used to extoll the virtues of courage to Nigerian students. And it is satisfying to note that after reading the novel, many Nigerian students cherish the old man's words, "Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated." Rip Van Winkle remains a humorous piece and anyone who sleeps in the classroom is nicknamed "Rip" by classmates.

Presently, contemporary American young adult literature is yet to get into Nigerian high schools. International publishers like Macmillan would do well to promote American adolescent novels alongside Nigerian adolescent fiction, which is steadily on the rise. Today, Macmillan promotes adolescent literature with its Pacesetters Series more than any other publishing Company in Nigeria. It is hoped that one day Robert Cormier's I am the Cheese, The Chocolate War, and the like would be found in Nigerian classrooms.

In Nigerian institutes of higher learning, the teaching of American literature deals with the development of national literature by combining background lectures and close analysis of texts by major writers. In most cases in Nigerian universities, the course begins with the novel--the 19th century works of Hawthorne, Melville, and Mark Twain, before covering the 20th century works of Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Steinbeck. There is no special prerequisite for a student taking the American literature course. Since literature is becoming less "British" in Nigerian Schools, other writings in English, especially American, are bound to come into the literature curriculum. For those Nigerians who long to visit the U.S. and those who have not lived there, serious reading in American literature would obviously provide some vicarious experience of some aspects of American life and culture. American literature undoubtedly adds variety and enjoyment to the literary curriculum of Nigerian schools.

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Reports of Professional Activities

Writings and Articulation Needs Addressed by Summer Conference

by
Sofia Newton

Last summer the difficult issue of articulation in writing was addressed on a statewide level through the Conference on Improving Writing in Arizona's Schools and Colleges. The conference was conducted on the Northern Arizona University campus July 13-18, where approximately sixty representatives from Arizona's high school districts, community colleges, and universities met to address the problems of teaching writing at the three levels and to clarify the competencies to be achieved at each succeeding level.

The prime mover behind the conference was Dr. Robert E. Shafer, Director of English Education at Arizona State University. In the spring of 1985, ASU had hosted a conference in High School/College Articulation in Writing, which lasted for a mere two days, a time all too short to accomplish the business at hand. It was then that Dr. Shafer conceived the idea of and began planning for a longer conference. He secured funds from ASU, the University of Arizona, NAU, Maricopa Community College District, Western Savings, and several state agencies; these were matched by funds from the University of Michigan's English Composition Board and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. NAU was selected to be the conference site because of Flagstaff's congenial summer climate. The cost of attending the conference, including room and board, was free to participants, who were selected on the basis of proposals sent to a planning committee.

Each school district, community college, or university wishing to participate was required to develop a team of two to three persons. The ideal team was one which consisted of an English teacher, a teacher from another discipline, and an administrator. Each team had to prepare a written statement describing (1) the status of writing in its school/college, (2) the efforts currently underway to facilitate articulation among the various educational levels in its community, (3) the status of writing in disciplines other than English, and (4) future plans for the development of writing in its schools and colleges.

In addition to the Arizona teams, there were two prestigious out-of-state experts present. Dan Fader, Chairman of the University of Michigan's Composition Board and author of Hooked on Books, was vital to the conference in the role of planner, financier, and speaker. Also, Peggy Shumaker, formerly of the University of Alaska, now of Old Dominion University, was present as both facilitator and speaker.

Writing problems were addressed in both a small group format as well as through the participants meeting together as a whole. Teaching teams addressed the topics explored by the smaller groups. Beverly Merrill of Mesa Public Schools and Diane Clymer of the University of Arizona addressed the issue of writing assessment; Peggy Shumaker and Dan Fader addressed improving student writing; and Susan DeKavallas of Mesa Public Schools, Julie Bertch of South Mountain Community College, and Robert Shafer addressed articulation in writing and writing across the curriculum.

The conference concluded with a panel discussion, "Where Do We Go from Here?" which included representatives from high schools, community colleges, and ASU and the U of A. Members were in agreement that the conference had been a great success, that many important issues were discussed and contacts made. Most felt they were working more closely towards a common goal than they had initially realized. Finally, the panel and participants expressed the hope that there would be future conferences for the purpose of articulation, so that the process begun last summer would continue in the future.

NCTE Members Oppose Making English the "Official Language," and Take Stands on Other Education Issues

Members of NCTE present at the 1986 Fall Conference in San Antonio passed resolutions opposing movements in the states to establish English as the official language and warning legislators and education officials of the dangers of highly specific curriculum mandates for English language arts. NCTE members at the organization's Annual Business Metting at the Hyatt Regency Hotel urged publishers to make sure that literature by minority writers remains in print and available to teachers in the classroom.

Texts of the resolutions follow:

On English as the "Official Language"

BACKGROUND: The proposers of this resolution voiced concern about the current movement in some states to establish English as the official language. Such efforts, successful in one instance so far, can include removal of the native languages of many Americans

from official documents, they noted, and called such actions potentially discriminatory.

The proposers commended the recent Public Broadcasting System TV series "The Story of English" for illustrating the capacity of English to accommadate and incorporate the linguistic characteristics of many peoples and cultures.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English condemn any attempts to render invisible the native languages of any Americans or to deprive English of the rich influences of the languages and cultures of any of the peoples of America;

that NCTE urge legislators, other public officials, and citizens to oppose actively action intended to mandate or declare English as an official language or to "preserve," "purify," or "enhance" the language. Any such action will not only stunt the vitality of the language, but also ensure its erosion and in effect create hostility toward English, making it more difficult to teach and learn; and

that NCTE widely publish this resolution to its affiliates and other professional organizations through news releases, letters to legislators, boards of education and other state officials, especially in those states attempting to legislate English as an official language.

On Mandated Language Arts Instruction

BACKGROUND: The Proposers of this resolution voiced concern that in the rush to upgrade students' reading and writing skills and achieve accountability, some state legislators and education officials are restricting teachers to specific instructional approaches, mandating reading and vocabulary lists, and setting schedules for writing assignments.

Such practices, the proposers pointed out, undermine the efforts of English language arts professionals to preserve a balanced curriculum for English. They deprive students of opportunities to reflect on what they read and revise and edit what they write. They also interfere with teachers' ability to respond to individual students' needs.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English oppose all policies that mandate or officially endorse instructional approaches, specify reading and vocabulary lists, and require reading and writing assignments that amount to accumulating numbers rather than giving students valid language experiences; and that NCTE advise federal and state legislators and agencies, board of education members, school officials and administrators that mandating or officially endorsing curricular and instructional practices is not only destructive of professionalism and morale, but forces teachers to focus on the minutiae of mechanics and isolated skills development, contradicting what our profession knows about sound teaching practice and language learning.

On the Availability of Literature by Minority Writers

BACKGROUND: The NCTE members who proposed this resolution pointed out the commitment of teachers of English to a multicultural approach to literature and language. They expressed concern that minority literature and recent works by minorities which have not been commercially successful are among the first to be dropped from publishers' lists and from anthologies. This practice, the proposers said, limits the range of literature students can encounter in school.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English strongly urge publishers (1) to recognize that the English profession represents a distinct market which needs the continuing availability of materials of all cultures in order to expose students to the whole literary and language heritage of our society and (2) to join NCTE to find ways of providing these vital materials.

NCTE Spring Conference

"Renewing Ourselves, Humanizing Our Classrooms" is the theme for the 1987 Spring Conference on Teaching English and the Language Arts, scheduled for March 26-28 in Louisville, Kentucky. Sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English, the annual conference brings together teacher educators, classroom teachers, and instructional leaders from elementary and secondary schools for three days of workshops, panel discussions, exhibits of professional materials, an idea exchange, and general sessions and luncheons with nationally known speakers.

The conference, at the Galt House, is preceded by a series of all-day workshops Wednesday, March 25. Concurrent sessions Thursday through Saturday are arranged in three strands: for elementary language arts teachers, for secondary school teachers, and for teacher educators and those engaged in staff development for the teaching of English language arts. The secondary school strand includes sessions for junior high and middle school teachers.

The elementary strand of concurrent sessions focuses on ways to enrich children's development of literacy through effective classroom approaches to reading and literature, writing, and language. Among the program topics in the elementary strand are strategies for improving reading comprehension, multicultural perspectives in grades K-8, improving listening skills, and using computers in K-3 language arts programs.

The secondary school strand features programs on recent young adult literrature in the curriculum, characteristics of exemplary schools, whole language applications to middle school curriculum, leadership style differences in small and large English departments, humanizing basic skills through literature, teaching Greek tragedy, multicultural experiences in the classroom, and cognitive/affective development of junior high students.

Featured in the teacher education strand are programs on recent recommendations for change in teacher education, writing apprehension and the training of teachers, teacher inquiry, effectiveness of methods classes, humanizing the teaching of writing, and effects of legislation on teacher education in Texas.

For additional information or for a copy of the 1987 Spring Conference Preview (which includes registration information), write NCTE Spring Conference Information, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Northern Arizona Young Authors' Conference

A conference for young authors will be held in Flagstaff on March 28, 1987 at NAU. It will be sponsored by Northern Arizona Reading Council and the Center for Excellence in Education.

Young authors who have participated in writing programs in their classes will be selected from elementary schools throughout Flagstaff. They will enjoy a day of writing, reading, and sharing the writing process with professional authors from around the state.

For more information call:

Amy Burks 779-1391
or
Pam Lasher 779-6043

National Endowment Offers Summer Programs

The National Endowment for the Humanities will offer a variety of programs for English teachers around the nation in the summer of 1987. Institutes and seminars on Shakespeare as well as a variety of other topics are open to anyone currently teaching in a secondary school. Stipends are $1,000 a week, normally for four weeks. Travel, room and board, and free graduate credit are all part of the package.

Arizona has hosted a number of such projects in the past, notably "English Literature and the Rise of Representative Government" in 1984 and two seminars on "Women as Authors and Audience in Shakespeare's England" on weekends during the fall of 1986. The latter was sponsored by the Arizona Humanities Council.

NEH has invited a proposal for a repeat of the 1984 institute for history and English teachers to be held at NAU under the direction of Dr. James Fitzmaurice in the summer of 1988. Anyone interested in information about the 1988 institute should write Dr. Fitzmaurice at the English Department, NAU, Flagstaff, AZ 86011.

For materials on the 1987 institutes and seminars, write Ms. Stephanie Q. Katz, Humanities Instruction in Elementary and Secondary Schools, Education Division, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, DC 20506.

BOOKS

Are you looking for something on . . .

What We Know and What We Need To Know About Class Size?

How does class size affect the quality of learning in junior and senior high English courses? A new report analyzes what is known about this controversial factor in education and poses questions needing further research. It is published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English.

"In reviewing the research, we found that class size by itself is not the issue; rather, it is how class size affects other activities in the classroom," says William L. Smith of the University of Pittsburgh, who headed the NCTE task force investigating the question. The panel, made up of university researchers and classroom teachers of English, worked to define the issues raised by class size research and concluded that "class size, when combined with mode of instruction, is a powerful determinant of learning." Its publication, Class Size and English in the Secondary School, gives an overview of the topic for future researchers, school administrators, legislators, and the general public.

The NCTE report discusses current knowledge about class size as it affects the subject matter taught in English classes and the instructional design of such classes. It specifies the kinds of research needed on class size in conjunction with other variables. Its aim is to help education policymakers reach beyond custom and common sense and determine optimal sizes for English classes.

Class Size and English in the Secondary School, prepared by William L. Smith, Chair, and the NCTE Task Force on Class Size and Workload in Secondary English Instruction. 35 pages, paperbound. Price $6.00; NCTE members, $5.00. ISBN; 0-8141-0692-7. LC: 86-4399. Available from ERIC/RCS and NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 06927-015.)

How to Help Minorities Succeed in Writing?

Today's failure rate among minority students has been called "atrocious." But if classroom teachers and local administrators can concentrate on making a few basic changes of attitude and practice, they can give speakers of nonstandard dialects the support they need to become literate in standard English.

This is the message of Language Diversity and Writing Instruction, a new book published by two ERIC Clearinghouses, on Urban Education and on Reading and Communication Skills; the Institute for Urban and Minority Education; and the National Council of Teachers of English.

Authors Marcia Farr and Harvey Daniels explain in down-to-earch language how significant recent findings from research in language, literacy, and learning apply to language minorities. They say it's time for schools to break out of standard procedures for teaching writing that in fact work against learning how to write well. They do not minimize the difficulty of introducing orderly processes for teaching writing in poverty-area schools where chaotic social conditions have taken their toll. But they call for personal effort by teachers and administrators to apply recent findings from research in the everyday teaching of that most basic of school subjects.

Farr is a specialist in sociolinguistics and language acquisition at the University of Illinois at Chicago; Daniels, a teacher educator at the National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois, is co-director of the Illinois Writing Project. The authors isolate 15 key factors shown through research to be associated with effective writing instruction but widely ignored in secondary school writing programs. They suggest ways to change traditional attitudes and course formats to take account of this new knowledge and guide readers to a wealth of source material telling how to apply it on an everyday basis. Thus they provide a guide for the individual teacher of English or other subjects requiring writing, as well as for department chairs concerned with staff deveopment, district inservice specialists, and administrators responsible for setting broad goals for teaching programs.

The Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College/Columbia University, and NCTE cooperated with the federal Office of Educational Research and Improvement to make this book available.

(Language Diversity and Writing Instruction by Marcia Farr and Harvey Daniels. 99 pages, paperbound. Price $9.75; NCTE members, $7.00. ISBN: 0-8141-2659-6. Audience: Teachers and administrators of secondary school English programs, school administrators, curriculum planners, teacher educators. Available from ERIC/RCS & NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 26596-015. Also available from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Teachers College, Columbia Univ., New York, NY.)

Exemplary Curricula?

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English have published a new edition of their annual review of selected curriculum guides. The NCTE Committee to Evaluate Curriculum Guides and Competency Requirements reviewed curriculum documents from state education departments and local school districts. The documents which best fulfill the committee's criteria for excellence are described in the 1986 edition of Recommended English Language Arts Curriculum Guides, K-12.

Like previous editions, this year's booklet lists the NCTE criteria which themselves provide a framework for curriculum planning. They cover the philosophy behind the curriculum, the policies and procedures it calls for, its objectives for students and teachers, the kinds of organization required to implement the curriculum, the view of the learning process reflected in the document, as well as its view of the study of language, reading/literature, writing, media, and its proposals for handling evaluation.

Along with 1986 curriculum review, the new booklet reprints evaluations from 1985 and 1984. Some of the curriculum guides reviewed in the 1986 booklet are available complete through the ERIC database.

(Recommended English Language Arts Curriculum Guides, K-12. Price $2.50; NCTE members, $2.00. Available from ERIC/RCS and NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. NCTE Stock No. 39515-015.)

THE ULTIMATE DESIRE: I WANT WORDS

I want words
stimulating, intriguing, eager, yet purposeful like
    Aunt Chloe in her apron pinnafore
suprising like
        and I started to list them
        on and on my fingers-danced
till I came to a breathless corner in my catalog of wishes

Oh! give me the whole juicy thesaurus
command over the entire language in all its flagwaving glory

so they'll line up in tuneful regiments
marching to my every mood

I want to sing in four-part poetry:
dazzling all the left-handed people who clap
mesmerizing all the left feet of marching bands
thrilling all the left eyes of winking lovers

I don't want much: I want the words

Elaine Hardt